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JIMMY

A Play in One Act

BY

A. PATRICK, JR.

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JIMMY.

CAST.

WILLIAM BANCROFT.
JIMMY.

TIME:—*Midnight.*

PLACE:—*Bancroft's living room.*

•

JIMMY.

SCENE:—*Richly furnished living room. Window in center, back. Door at left of window, hat rack by it. Center table with books and lamp on same; two easy chairs each side of table. Cellarette or Buffet over against wall right. Fireplace left front; High-backed morris-chair before it.*

(*Curtain rises showing room in darkness except for light from fire and moonlight coming through window. WILLIAM BANCROFT enters through door, slowly; acts depressed. Takes hat and coat off and hangs them on hat rack. Takes letter out of pocket and looks at it. Walks slowly down and takes seat in morris-chair—letter in hand.*)

WILLIAM. The moth and the flame. A rag and a bone and a hank of hair. How true. (*reads letter*) DEAR BILLY,—I'm sorry Billy. You would love me, poor boy, and I could not help being kind to you. I sent this to your club, Billy, as I will never see you again. Pray for me and forgive me, I could not help loving him. (A chauffeur, Lord help her.) Think of me kindly as the years go by, (yes, I shall always do so) and when you are married may you enjoy love as I have found it. (Ah! Little girl, you do not know what you ask—love is elusive. (*throws letter in fire*) Good-by fond love 'Burn.' And with your

last dying embers blot out the memory of a fool's desire.) (*sits meditatively*)

(*Long pause. A man, poorly dressed; cap over his eyes, appears at window, peers in. A faint click is heard. He opens window and steps into room. He moves about room playing electric light about room over the different articles of furniture. Light plays on gold-framed picture on table; he takes picture and puts it in his pocket. He plays light up and down back of morris-chair. WILLIAM starts. Man walks over to buffet and starts to work at a drawer. WILLIAM takes out revolver and looking over back of morris-chair, and—.*)

WILLIAM. Hands up! (*smothered curse from JIMMY as he complies*) Right about face. (*WILLIAM walks over and holds revolver against JIMMY's back as he searches him and takes a revolver out of his hip pocket*) I've caught you, my fine fellow. (*growl from JIMMY*) Keep perfectly still while I throw a little light on the scene. (*lights lamp on table*) Ah! Turn around so I can get a good look at you. This is the first time I ever had the pleasure of meeting a real live burglar face to face.

JIMMY. (*pulls hat further down over his eyes as he growls*) Cut the comedy. You've got me dead to rights. What are you going to do about it?

WILLIAM. (*examining revolver he took from JIMMY*) A nice little toy and loaded, too! I should think you'd be afraid it would go off. (*slips it in his pocket. JIMMY looks around stealthily as WILLIAM examines revolver—starts to edge toward door*) There, there, don't get nervous. (*looks toward buffet*) Ah! Yes. See that decanter and those glasses over there? Bring them here and put them on the table.

JIMMY. Quit your kidding. I've made a bloomin'

fool of myself by being caught, so end the agony. Call the police, they will be glad to see me. What kind of a game are you playing any way?

WILLIAM. Yes, it's a game we'll play. You'll play the part of butler. Come! Get a move on you. (*threatening JIMMY, and as JIMMY gets the decanter and glasses*) Yes, that's right. Bring them right over here. (*as JIMMY puts them on table*) So! Now, help yourself and pour one for me. (*JIMMY protests by actions and WILLIAM flourishes gun and JIMMY pours two glasses. JIMMY, when through, stands directly in front of chair by table and WILLIAM threatens JIMMY with the gun and commands in loud voice*) Sit down! (*JIMMY sits down hurriedly*) Here's a toast to two poor devils who have each had a disappointment.

(*Both drink.*)

JIMMY. (*jumps up as he puts glass down*) Now, I suppose, you will call the police?

WILLIAM. Wait! Come on, sit down. Don't be in such a hurry, we haven't had a smoke yet. (*gets up, puts his revolver on table and walks over to buffet with back to JIMMY*)

JIMMY. (*eyes the gun; looks at WILLIAM's back; takes the gun, jumps up, pointing gun at WILLIAM*) Now, hands up, you! I've got you covered.

WILLIAM. (*wheels around and walks toward JIMMY, laughing loudly*) Ha! ha! It isn't loaded, you chump. Do you think I'd be fool enough to leave it on the table if it were? (*JIMMY drops his hand by his side in disgust. WILLIAM springs for JIMMY and they fight for the gun—WILLIAM gets it*) You certainly are some burglar. Of course it's loaded. I just wanted to test your nerve. You haven't got any. But, there, sit down. Let's talk it over.

JIMMY. There's nothing to talk over. You've caught me; that settles it.

WILLIAM. It may be a little out of the ordinary

to entertain a burglar but you've come at a time when I need diversion, and you must give it to me. If you make it interesting enough possibly there will be something in it for you.

JIMMY. (*angrily*) What are you trying to do, make a fool out of me?

WILLIAM. No, I'll give you my word I'm not.

JIMMY. Well, what do you want me to do? Dance a highland-fling or sing a little opera?

WILLIAM. It may seem strange to you, but I'm lonesome. Come, smoke up. (*hands a cigar over*) Sit around a while. You've had a disappointment and I can sympathize with you.

JIMMY. (*mutters as he lights cigar*) Might as well humor him.

WILLIAM. Did you ever stop to consider how pointedly Kipling gave us the means of expressing our feelings about the woman who did not care? A rag and a bone, etc. (*pause*) I take it you are down on your luck?

JIMMY. It couldn't be worse.

WILLIAM. I suppose you look around this room and consider me a fortunate member of society, eh?

JIMMY. I'd be satisfied to change places with you.

WILLIAM. Wealth and pleasant surroundings are of no avail when a heart is wounded. Like beauty—love, sorrow, and hate are no respecter of persons.

JIMMY. You may be right, Mr.——

WILLIAM. Bancroft.

JIMMY. You may be right, Mr. Bancroft, but, believe me, sorrow, troubles and disappointments are not in it with real poverty.

WILLIAM. I guess you are right. But, how comes it that you, a strong man, cannot find honest employment?

JIMMY. There are plenty to be had but I cannot keep them.

WILLIAM. Surely, a man of your appearance and education, as shown in your speech, can find plenty of honest work?

JIMMY. You're right. There are positions for men who look like me. But, I've got a record; I've been in jail and the mark of the jail-bird is on me deep. It seems impossible to wipe it out. Oh! I've tried. I got out of jail three months ago. I made a vow I'd live straight. I did not realize what I was up against. I thought the best place to start would be a country town, so I tried one of the small up-the-state cities. I got a job. Having a pretty good education I got my chance as time clerk in a shoe factory. But it was no use. A curse seems to follow a jail-bird. The past is like a seamonster; it stretches out it's callous arms and drags a man down—down. A jail-bird's past is recorded in a mysterious information bureau. He gets a job. He is allowed to think himself safe. Then, when the past has commenced to fade, this mysterious, dreadful information bureau sends out through its underground channels—records of the man's past. It is fate. I commenced to notice it a month ago. The men began to shun me and cast suspicious glances in my direction. I felt the blackness of despair creep into my heart. The blow fell at last. My employer called me to his office one day, and read to me—my record. My pleadings were in vain, I was fired. A man under a cloud without a home, without a friend. So here I am. It's the only way out.

WILLIAM. (*stands up and faces JIMMY*) Will you let me shake you by the hand? (*they do*) Your words moved me greatly. A moment before you came in I thought my life was a blank. The girl I loved ran away with her father's chauffeur. Our wedding announcements had been circulated. I was looking forward to happiness—when the blow fell. It left me stunned. I received her letter about seven o'clock and from then until eleven I walked the streets in a daze. When I came back to my rooms ten minutes ago the worst effects of the blow had passed and I was looking forward to a life without an incentive, with-

out the spark that keeps one young, but your story has opened up a future for me. We can face life together. Fight down our disappointments. Help each other to forget.

JIMMY. What's the use. I am like a branded horse; if you take me in you will be caught with the goods. You're kind, boss, but——

WILLIAM. Here! Here! We are both taking this too seriously. Now, here's another toast and a good one. (*both take glasses*) Oblivion to the past! Surely you are not a criminal at heart. Tell me your story, it will help you.

JIMMY. My story, no doubt, is like many a man's who is serving time in Sing Sing to-day. I was born in a small country town. What a pleasant boyhood I had. An elder brother and I, between us, shared a mother's love, that is the only bright spot in my whole existence. (*pause*) Ever since I can remember I had a desire to get away from the home town and see the world—what a mistake that generally is—so when I was fifteen I packed up my belongings and with a few dollars I had saved up—left the town under cover of darkness. I left without a farewell. The ache to my mother's heart I did not consider,—then. Mother was the sweetest character on God's fair earth. Just the day before, she had been reading to us, and at the finish of the tale, put an arm around each of us and said, "A child's life lived honestly is a mother's only joy."

WILLIAM. (*repeats in low voice*) A child's life lived honestly is a mother's only joy.

JIMMY. To make a long story short. I reached the city. My money gave out before I secured employment. At a cheap lodging house I got in with a pretty tough lot. Soon as they learned I was down on my luck they began their evil suggestions. How well they knew the time to tempt me. They had a job on one night and said they could use me. After some argument I was persuaded. We did the job;

they got away. I was railroaded for ten years. My God! Ten years. I got out three months ago. You know the rest.

WILLIAM. There. You'll feel better now you've got that off your mind. I'll tell you how you can help me. My father died just six years and ten months ago and left an estate to be divided between my brother and myself. He has disappeared. I can find no trace of him. He will be declared legally dead in another two months. It will be your job to trace him. Is it a go?

JIMMY. Do you mean it. I'll be glad to do it. Give me the particulars.

WILLIAM. I have a picture of him around somewhere, taken when he was a boy. I'll go and hunt it up. (*leaves the room*)

JIMMY. If there were more men like him in the world what a difference it would make. (*feels in his pockets and brings out the picture—jumps to his feet*) Here, Mr. Bancroft, the picture. (*looks at it and starts*) Little Jimmy Bancroft! (*starting toward door*) My Brother! (*stops and waits by table*)

WILLIAM. (*returning*) I cannot find it. (*notices picture in JIMMY'S hand and his queer expression*) That's it, my man. What's the matter, do you see a ghost?

JIMMY. (*with feeling*) Is the man you want to find James Bancroft?

WILLIAM. Yes! Yes! Do you know him?

JIMMY. You lived in Waynesville. Your father had a lumber mill?

WILLIAM. He did—You cannot mean,—

JIMMY. (*hands picture to WILLIAM and takes his hat off*) Yes, I am he.

WILLIAM. (*taking both of JIMMY'S hands*) Jimmy!

(*Hold tableaux.*)

CURTAIN.

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